



Department of Justice

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SPRINGFIELD WOMAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR TRADING CHILD PORN

Worldwide Internet 'Chat Room' Used to Trade Graphic Images

Springfield, IL - The wife of a Springfield, Illinois man who was previously sentenced to 20 years in federal prison for trading child pornography via a private international Internet 'chat room' was sentenced today. United States District Judge Jeanne E. Scott sentenced Melissa Bowser, age 27, to 13 years in prison, as announced by Rodger A. Heaton, U.S. Attorney for the Central District of Illinois. Melissa Bowser was also ordered to a life term of mandatory supervised release following her term of imprisonment. Judge Scott previously sentenced Melissa Bowser's husband, Billy Joe Bowser, age 34, in March 2007, to the statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

Melissa and Billy Joe Bowser were arrested and charged in March 2006. Each subsequently pled guilty to receiving, possessing and transporting child pornography. Billy Joe pled guilty in October 2006; Melissa entered her pleas of guilty in November 2006.

The charges against the couple were the result of an international investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Federal Bureau of Investigation of Internet-based child pornography using a chat room known as "Kiddypics & Kiddyvids." The chat room was hosted on the Internet through the WinMX software program that also allowed users to engage in "peer-to-peer" file sharing.

The investigation found that the child pornography images collected and traded by the Bowsers included images of children younger than two years old engaged in sex with adult males as well as pornographic images of children reflecting violence and bondage.

U.S. Attorney Heaton commended the investigative work performed by the Springfield Computer Crimes Task Force, a multi-agency group dedicated to the investigation and prosecution of computer crime, and thanked First Assistant U.S. Attorney John Childress, who prosecuted the cases.

The case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales launched Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafchildhood.gov.

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